



Less is more in latest Z coupe

One of the most noticeable features of Nissan's new 370Z is what isn't there rather than what is.

The new coupe replaces the 350Z which has been part of Nissan's New Zealand range since 2003.

And what the new car doesn't have is the large strut brace that connected the two rear strut turrets and made rear luggage space so awkward.

Nissan says the extra structural reinforcements in the shell of the new car mean a rear strut brace is no longer required, although an aluminium luggage partition beam behind the seats has been retained.

The lack of the large brace showed off the 370Z's much improved luggage-carrying abilities last week at the launch of the new car. At last the car can carry two occupants and their luggage.

The new coupe is an entirely new car and shares little with its predecessor.

Every panel is new and every dimension has been changed from the 350Z although Nissan is quick

to point out that the new car is indisputably a Z car with its long bonnet, short overhangs and cut off rear end.

The new car is 65mm shorter than the e 350Z. It is also lower by 8mm and sits 30mm wider.

But it also sits on a significantly shorter wheel-base.

That has been cut back by 100mm and with the rear wheels closer to the driver it feels like a tighter, more seat-of-the-pants drive.

This is also helped by the seats being lower to the floor.

But Nissan had to do it that way because the roofline is a different shape and the high point is now above the windscreen.

While the car's styling shares many of the cues of the old car, the biggest changes are to the front.

The thin arrowhead xenon headlights are a strong visual cue, and there is a deeper air intake which adds to the aggressive look of the car.

Aerodynamic efficiency is improved with a discreet front splitter at the front, and at the back a rear spoiler is integrated into

the tailgate to reduce lift and creating extra down-force.

The bonnet, doors and tailgate are made of aluminium and there is a greater use of lighter materials and components in the body structure and mechanical layout.

However, extra stiffening means the car is just 15kg lighter than its predecessor.

The 370Z is still a strict two-seater and is started by pushing the engine start-stop button. This fires up a new 3.7-litre engine, a development of the 3.5-litre unit in the 350Z.

But 35 per cent of the engine's components are new and Nissan says the result is a markedly different motor that is not only more powerful with a higher rev limit but that is also more refined, responsive and fuel efficient.

The VVEL (Variable Valve Event and Lift) system gives the engine better breathing which helps deliver the extra low and high-end torque.

The high-revving engine with its longer stroke also offers more bottom end power.

Power goes to the rear wheels via a carbon fibre composite prop shaft, a development first seen in a production car on the 350Z.

The new engine pushes 245kW at 7000rpm (up from 230kW in the final iteration of 350Z) and 363Nm torque.

Nissan says that while power and torque have risen, fuel consumption has decreased to 10.5 l/100km on the combined cycle, and CO₂ emissions are now at 249g/km on the manual version, an improvement in both cases of 11 per cent. The seven-speed automatic transmission is cleaner and more frugal, emitting 247g/km of CO₂ and using 10.4l/100km on the combined cycle.

There are two new transmission systems.

The new six-speed manual gearbox is based on the unit in the 350Z, but has a special feature that allows the driver to change gear as quickly and as smoothly as a racing driver.

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More power: Nissan's 370Z coupe produces 245kW from 3.7 litres.

More grip, more agility

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The SynchroRev Match feature ensures revs are always at the optimum level when the driver is changing gear, delivering heel-and-toe changes.

Sensors on the clutch and on the gear lever itself monitor driver actions to blip the throttle on down-shifts and maintain constant engine revs when changing up.

The car is also available with a seven-speed automatic.

It can be driven as a conventional automatic or as a clutchless manual, using either the centre shift lever or magnesium paddles behind the steering wheel to change gear.

SynchroRev Match is also a feature of the automatic transmission.

The new car has a similar weight distribution as the 350Z – front axle 53 per cent, rear axle 47 per cent.

Nissan says the new car's shorter wheelbase improves its agility, and the wider track enhances grip.

Torsional rigidity of the body has been increased by up to 30 per cent,

notably at the front where a bracing bar has been mounted on top of the suspension turrets.

The car gets a new double wish-bone front suspension layout and a revised multi-link rear suspension. Nissan says both are lighter yet stronger than before with greater lateral stability.

The car sits on 19-inch alloy wheels with the front tyres 245/40R19 and wider 275/35R19s at the rear.

A viscous limited-slip differential is standard along with Vehicle Dynamic Control (VDC) which combines electronically operated traction control and stability systems to reduce engine torque and/or apply individual wheel braking if needed. For track day use, VDC can be deactivated via a dashboard switch.

The rack and pinion steering system has also been revised to provide more communicative feedback and better response around the dead ahead position. With electric speed-sensitive assistance, the steering is designed to deliver greater agility around town and

enhanced stability at motorway speeds.

Brakes are 355mm discs at the front and 350mm at the rear with four-piston aluminium callipers at the front and twin-piston callipers at the back.

Driver and passenger airbags are matched by side airbags and curtain airbags, and active head restraints are also fitted as standard.

Also standard on the 370Z is a safety-plus pop-up bonnet which raises itself automatically in a collision. This creates a cushion of air between the bonnet and the engine hard points, to lessen the impact on a pedestrian.

Bluetooth mobile phone connectivity is standard. Cruise control buttons are also set into the steering wheel. Climate control is also standard.

There is a Bose 6CD in-dash auto changer with AM/FM radio and MP3/WMA capability and eight speakers.

The new 370Z is priced at \$71,200 for the manual and \$73,200 for the automatic.



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Shorter: Nissan's 370Z sits on a wheelbase that is 100mm shorter than its 350Z predecessor.



Classical look: The interior of Nissan's 370Z has already won prizes